

SKETCH OF LIFE
OF
GOV. OGLESBY

JOHN COOK

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

B
0345w
C. p. 2

OGLESBY AT HOME.

A Visit to the Hon. Richard James Oglesby at his Home at Lincoln, Logan County—
A Pen Picture—A Marvelously Varied Career—Carpenter and Lawyer—A Soldier
in Two Wars—Not a good Politician, but a Plain, Honest Man who "Keeps Close
to the People."

At 3:00 a. m. the Chicago train stopped not long since at Lincoln, Ill. From the rear sleeper a solitary pilgrim descended and encountered a fierce snow-storm that buffeted him in the face, and pushed against him, and roared menacingly from the telegraph-wires, as if to prevent his presence.

Long studied he as to the route which led to shelter from the hostile storm, and at length espied a little light in the far distance, which he reached after much struggling with ambuscading ditches, broken sidewalks, posts which suddenly came in the way as if they had sprung up from the ground to dispute his passage. At last, storm-beaten and sorely lacerated in his feelings over this ungenial welcome, he gained a fire and a bed.

Gazing from the hotel windows the next morning he found that Lincoln was not at its best. The sky was as sombre as if in three-quarter mourning; the streets were vast streams of mud, as black as night, and as unfathomable. Across the way were lines of stores, brick and wood, with their fronts "banged" to increase their height. There was a black dog in an opposite doorway that cast appealing and incessant glances at the door-handle, as if that were the thing which would admit him to the fire within. A few men, with their trousers thrust into muddy boots, came at intervals along the sidewalk, coming apparently from nowhere, wanting nothing as it seemed, and going to no place in particular.

Leaving the hotel in due season the pilgrim went out into the city. He boldly crossed the great channels of mud used for streets, but fortunately frozen into rigidity; he went east, then west, then diagonally otherwise, changing his course at intervals. He passed along sidewalks under wooden awnings; he saw vast collections of farmers' wagons side by side, their teams hitched to interminable lines of wooden railings; he passed parks whose trees had been sawed off at the top at a level so uniform that it appeared to be the work of some gigantic scytheman; and at last he reached the house to which he had been directed. He rang the bell, asked if the gentleman was in, and was informed that he lived somewhere else.

On another corner is a square, wooden house with some eccentric extensions on one or two sides, two stories in height, with a "hip" roof. It is not old, and yet somewhat remote from the time it was new. It appears comfortable in its external indications, not in the least ostentatious, suggestive of display, or the result of much wealth. A plain and yet substantial wooden fence surrounds the ground, which, a half acre or so in extent, is covered with forest and fruit trees. Taken as a whole, ground, house, fence, trees, suggest a moderate income, freedom from display, comfort, hospitality.

As he enters the gate the pilgrim notices a little conservatory which has been constructed over a portion of what was once a veranda along the front of the house. He sees the green of leaves and the brilliant hues of blossoms through the panes, and they afford him the first relief from the brown dead grass of winter and the gloom of the inky streets. The visitor pulls the bell of the door leading into the conservatory. Almost instantly the door is swung open, and there appears a well-shaped man just above medium height whose first suggestion is of greyness and geniality.

"Governor Oglesby?" ventures the visitor.

"Yes, sir," says he, "Walk right in!" he continues, with a beaming smile, and without taking the trouble to ask the name or the business of the new-comer. "This way," and a moment later the pilgrim is sitting in the library face to face with the Governor, and five minutes later is on as easy terms with him as if he had known him for half a century.

A VISITOR.

Cigars are proffered, lighted, and then they chat. Meanwhile the pilgrim studies the man before him, and becomes amazed. He notices the erect form, trim and well-proportioned as that of an athlete in training, and then bursts out:

"Is it possible that you are the 220 pounder whom I saw at Bird's Point in 1862, at Donaldson, later at Shiloh, and other places? Are you the one that during those days went cantering around on a horse that must have thought himself an equine Atlas, and who certainly 'toted' you about wishing that he had been a mule or never born?"

"I am the man," he answered with a smile so pleasant that it seemed to assert that nothing in his life had ever occurred to him which pleased him so much as the loss of fifty pounds of flesh and the change of his locks to a snowy white.

There is nothing especially salient in any single feature. The eyebrows are long, handsomely rounded, and black. The nose is neither small nor large, but one which, somewhat pointed and projecting, seems to aid him at moments when he is concentrated in his thought and speech. At such moments the entire face seems to thrust itself forward as if to constitute a species of pointed

wedge, with the nose as the terminal and entering point. The brows rally on the centre, the eyelids fall as if to protect the eyes in the approaching charge, the mouth narrows, even the cheeks are thrust towards the common centre. When intensely in earnest this appearance of concentration becomes marked and striking. It gives a vigor, an intensity, a strength to the face that transforms its character, especially when in repose. When he is full of humor the eyes open to their entire width and flash with indescribable fun; the mouth widens; the angry corrugations of the brow roll away; the cheeks broaden; the white teeth flash out—and the storm is over.

The eyes are a hazel gray, but are incessantly changeful. They are full of emitting light, they are now and then gloomily introspective, they are sad, they flash with fun; and, in brief, like every feature of his countenance, they are kaleidoscopic in their variety. He has in no respect that immobility so much admired in pictures of great historical characters. He has none of that impenetrability of face in which one reads nothing, but whose solemn eyes seem to pierce one's inmost soul. His expression continually changes, and is the exact reflex of every emotion that possesses him. One can find enjoyment simply by watching these inexhaustible movements of his features; they would tell a delightful and connected story without hearing a word that flows from the flexible lips.

His lips are thin and have none of that fullness so often seen in great speakers. The mouth is wide, and with the thin lips, seems to be indicative of firmness—even obstinacy. The face is cleanly shaven, the complexion fresh, the expression of the whole virile—a youthful face beneath a crown of snowy hair.

When in repose, his face has a touch of sadness, but it is still strong, composed, resigned. There is no suggestion of discontent nor of ill nature. It seems that of one who has suffered much, but who has had the endurance to encounter obstacles without subjugation.

As the pilgrim listens to him he is impressed with the idea that geniality and thorough good nature are predominant traits. He is kindly too. His allusions to old opponents—political, social or otherwise—are never accompanied with any bitterness. His anecdotes are those in which humor prevail, and he roars over the climax as heartily as the most appreciative listeners—a deep, hearty, honest laugh that is contagious, and makes one feel better, more honest, more kindly for having participated in it.

He is not all humor. At intervals a pathetic flash appears, and in a twinkle the eye of the speaker is humid, and the rain of emotion bespatters the cheek of his auditor. Often during his stay did the pilgrim find himself struggling in a whirlpool of tears and laughter.

HOW HE BECAME AN ABOLITIONIST.

"How was it, Governor," queried the visitor, "that you, a Kentuckian, became such a confirmed abolitionist?"

"Well, for many reasons, but one of the principal ones came from a negro man called 'Uncle Tim.' He was a slave who had descended from my grandfather to my father, and was one of several in the family. My father died when I was a small boy, and we became embarrassed, and in order to divide up what little there was left 'Uncle Tim' had to be sold. I well remember him as he stood up on a box to be ready for the sale. He was a powerful man, far above the average height, with a manly bearing, a fine face, and a skin as black as ebony. He had always been very fond of us children, and I thought almost as much of him as if he had been my own father.

"As he stood waiting he implored, with tears streaming from his eyes, a brother of my father to buy him. That was impossible, and, observing his dejection and surmising its cause, I said:

"'Uncle Tim,' I am going to work to earn money, and when I get enough I will buy you and set you free.

"His face lighted up with pride and pleasure as I said this, but which was immediately followed by a look of despair. He came down, lifted me up in his arms, and said sadly: 'Thanks, Marse Dick, you are a poor orphan and won't never be rich enough to buy Uncle Tim.' He was sold, and being past his prime, only brought some \$400.

"I moved to Illinois in time; I struggled; I went back to Kentucky, and grew no richer. I used to see Uncle Tim occasionally, and I always assured him that some day I would buy him. He always seemed to listen to me gratefully, but apparently had no hope of my success. In 1849, I went to California, and after much effort I made a few thousand dollars, and then returned to the States. The first thing I did was to fulfill my promise. I sent the money to my brother, and Uncle Tim was purchased.

"I was standing in front of the porch of my brother's house some days later, when Uncle Tim came out of a piece of woods a little distance away, and approached along a pathway. It was a striking picture—such as I never before or since have witnessed. He was a giant in stature; his abundant gray hair was thrown back on his shoulders, his face was livid and ashen, reminding one of the statue of Moses, by Michael Angelo. His countenance was aglow"—here Oglesby rose to his feet, and with expanded chest brought his upraised arm down with the sweep of a sledge-hammer, and continued—"and shone as if lighted by the very presence of the Holy Ghost. When he caught sight of me, he stopped, threw back his head, raised his arms far above him, and exclaimed: 'My God! my God! has the little orphan boy lived to buy and set me free!'

"Then he put his arms around me and tried to lift me as in the old days, but he had grown too weak, and I had grown too large. 'You can't lift me any more, Uncle Tim,' I said. 'No,' he answered in a sad tone; and then, with an exulting tone he shouted, as he turned his face toward the sky, 'Hallelujah! Hallelujah! I'se free!' "

"HONEST DICK."

In nothing to be inferred from the appearance and the conversation of the host was the visitor so much impressed as with the assurance of his inviolable honesty. He is the embodiment of perfect frankness. One who listens to him, who watches him as he talks, feels and knows beyond all cavil that he means just what he is saying, that he is concealing nothing, that there is no unuttered, secret thought. He impresses one with the conviction that he is no sham; that he has a profound hatred for all that is hollow or pretends to be what it is not. His beautiful sincerity shines on his honest face, rings in his vibrating and hearty tones, and forces itself as an unalterable conviction into the consciousness of every one who listens to him. Withal he is modest to a single degree that is almost girlish. When he speaks of himself, it is with diffidence and difficulty, unless it be some instance in which he has been the victim of some practical pleasantry on the part of his associates. To listen to his narration of his own life, as he tells it, he has been an humble lawyer, a modest, undeserving soldier, a Governor, and a member of the National Senate, all for no especial good that he has done, nothing possibly save the good will of his perhaps too partial friends.

His honesty of expression is sometimes curiously shown. "I don't like so-and-so," he would say, (possibly one of his political associates). "I do like Blank. He is honest; they may say what they will, he is honest." One would think that so old a politician would learn to mask his thoughts, but he is in no sense a Talleyrand. While it is apparent that perfect frankness pervades his utterances, it may be that he does not introduce and present every subject on which he has opinions. When he talks on a subject, he reserves nothing; but it may be that in the storehouse of his thought, there rest in silence deep convictions which he does not hold for everyday exhibitions. Often there is a play over his face, like the "heat" lightnings of summer, which afford glimpses of deep banks of clouds, and suggestions of a storm which is raging out of sight, far below the line of the horizon.

All these indications of his perfect integrity are borne out by the record of his long and varied life. Whether as a private citizen, a soldier, or a statesman, he has lived beyond reproach. There is no human being, whether political opponent or personal enemy—if he have any—can truthfully charge that he has, in the smallest particular, either in his private or his public career, ever varied from the unswerving line of honesty.

The pilgrim noticed that the host had many callers, and that he met and spoke with many people on the street. In no instance did he take them by the button-hole, or converse in low, mysterious tones. He stood erect and fronted his listener at arms' length—just good striking distance, and as if ready if needs be, to give or take straight from the shoulder. The pilgrim saw this, and concluded that the Governor is no politician; that he knows nothing of the mystery, the subterfuges, the dissembling, the sinuosities of the machine.

The altitude which men attain in the hard ascent of life is not to be considered, save with reference to the distance overcome, and the severity of the struggle. There are cases in which a man may reach the humble elevation of judge of the county court, and yet be entitled to more credit than one who succeeds in becoming President of this great Republic. Judged from this standpoint, there are few men in the Nation who are deserving of more credit for their endeavor and their attainment than ex-Governor Oglesby. Long, weary, indescribable has been the route which he has traversed. Few men of note in this country, almost none in any other country, have encountered obstacles of equal magnitude, and not one in a million who have encountered them has surmounted them. A brief allusion to his early days, afford more than a thousand mere assertions, a view of his indomitable energy, his unfailing virility, his undaunted perseverance.

EARLY DAYS.

He was born July 25, St. James' day, 1824, at a time when the people and the age were centuries behind the splendid period which now has possessed the world. Oldham, Ky., the place of his birth, and fifteen miles from Louisville, might as well have been in the middle of Sahara, although but so short a distance from a noted centre of civilization and refinement. His parents had come from Virginia; his mother was of English and his father of Scotch descent. From the latter he obtains undoubtedly much of his firmness and endurance—those qualities which have carried him through so many vicissitudes, and have held him steady in his determination.

His father was originally a farmer, and was Colonel of a militia regiment, and a member of the Legislature. In June, 1833, the father was living in Brownsboro; and during this year the cholera visited the locality, and in a very brief time carried off the father, mother, a brother and a sister. Another sister and himself were taken to the home of his father's brother, who lived in the village where the parents died. It was but a short time before another brother fell a victim to the insatiate scourge, cholera, and died on the bed on which young Oglesby was lying.

Can anything more desolate be imagined than the condition of this poor orphan? He was nine years of age, fatherless, motherless,

afflicted with all the distress and horror which come to a young boy who has just been enveloped in a whirlwind of death. Five family deaths, including those who were dearest to him, weighed upon him, and the burden was one which far more sturdy shoulders might have fallen under. There were no schools at that time for the use of the public. He could not read. In knowledge he was not one whit removed from savagery, except in the Christian teachings of his home. There was no money in those days in such remote districts as the one in which he lived. The people were primitive, kind, generous, hospitable. They could only pity his misfortunes and afford him such consolation as can be found in kind utterances and good wishes.

After the death of his father he managed, while with his uncle, to learn to read, spell, and write a little, and secure some knowledge of mental arithmetic. This is substantially all the actual schooling of his life, except a three months' term which he took in 1843 at Decatur, Ill. He worked for his uncle, doing the labor, much of it mental, which would be required of a boy in a small village. His life at this period was one of unusual privation, which, coupled with the death of his relatives and the dispersion of his family, gave a tinge of melancholy to a disposition which naturally was gay and exuberant. It occurred many times to the pilgrim as he sat in the cozy library and watched the play of light and shadow on the face of the Governor, that there was in his composition a suggestion of gloom which perhaps owed its origin to these early days of orphanage, severity, and servile labor.

In 1836 his uncle removed to Decatur, Ill., and brought with him the future Governor of this great Commonwealth, and two of his sisters. Did the young orphan feel like Dick Whittington, as he, equally friendless and poor, entered the great city of London, whose Lord Mayor he was one day to become? Probably he had no presentiment of his coming greatness; possibly, so far as he interrogated the future, a bit of land which he should in time own, and a modest competence earned by arduous and incessant labor and shared by some rosy-cheeked woman, formed the constituents of the enchanting picture with which his imagination supplied him.

For a year the family of six worked a small farm, slept, cooked, and lived in a log cabin. During this year, fate, as if he had not already been sufficiently afflicted, struck him again in the person of his younger sister, who died and was buried at Decatur. The uncle and nephew managed the farm and performed all the labor. Evidently discouraged with Illinois, the uncle, at the end of the year, migrated back to Kentucky, taking the nephew with him. The latter was put out to work on a farm, and at the end of another year the uneasy uncle once more removed to Decatur. It may be of interest to state that on their return to Decatur in 1837, a sister of young Oglesby, Ophelia, was married to a Mr. Adamson, and that she still resides at Decatur with her second husband, a Mr. Peddecord.

The migratory uncle remained one month in Decatur, and then took his family and line of march for Terre Haute, Ind., where the nephew was permitted to rest himself without emigrating.

Referring to this portion of his life, the Governor tells how near he once came to crossing the Stygian river, and of a curious mental state developed during the occurrence of the event. He went in swimming one day with a neighboring lad, although he could not swim a stroke. He managed, of course, to get beyond his depth, and at once sank.

"I had heard" he said, "that when a person in the water goes down the third time, he drowns. I counted distinctly the number of times I sank, and when I went down the third time I said to myself: 'Now I am dead!' Every event of my life passed before me with vivid distinctness, but without creating any peculiar feeling. I saw them go by as if they were a swiftly-moving panorama. I was dead, I knew I was dead, and I died without a struggle or pain of any kind whatever." With the aid of some men in a neighboring mill, his companion fished him out, and in half an hour he was restored to life and consciousness. He suffered intensely during the progress of his recovery, his misery being augmented by the fact that he had gone in bathing without permission. His feelings during the period of his sinking and his sensations, or rather the absence of them, as he sank the last time—his conviction that he was dead, are experiences all unique in their character—and develop some curious psychological facts.

AN ACTOR.

The year came to an end, and the uncle again prepared to flit to some other locality. This time he did not take his nephew with him; he gave him his benediction and a dollar, and started him toward the grand rallying point, Decatur, while he took up his line of march for Indianapolis. At this point in his life, the future Senator from Illinois had a silver dollar in his pocket, his future before him, and a walk of a hundred miles to Decatur. The trip has some points of interest in that the young tramp was taken for a runaway apprentice, and in the further fact that he came near becoming an actor, in which case there would have been a material change in his after life. At a place known as Wallace's, he found a troupe of players known as the Jeffersons,—(were they any kin of the famous Joe?) The Governor speaks as follows:

"The company consisted of an old gentleman, a son, and two or three daughters. During the evening, while sitting around the big log fire, I crouched down between the old man and the jamb of the fireplace. After a time the old gentleman, turning to me, put his hand on my head in a kindly manner, and said, 'My boy, would you like to become a showman?' 'Yes,' I answered, 'I had rather be a showman than anything else in the world.' He replied, 'I

have a notion to take you with me, but whom do you belong to?' 'My father and mother are dead; my uncle has turned me off to go to my sister in Decatur, and I belong to nobody. I can just as well go with you as not.'

"I slept but little that night. I was full of anticipations as to what might be in case they took me with them, and I was in despair fearing that I would not be wanted. The morning came at last, and with alternate dashes of hope and fear, I awaited my fate. The teams were brought out, and as they were about to start, the old gentleman came to me and said, 'My boy, I should like very much to have you; I have talked to my daughters and Mr. Wallace about you. Mr. Wallace says he knows your uncle and others of your relatives, and he thinks perhaps we had best not take you.' My disappointment over this conclusion was poignant, for I was most anxious to go with them."

Upon reaching Decatur, he obtained work in a hotel. "One of my most pleasing recollections of this period of my life," says the Governor, "relates to a time when I was employed in the hotel, and when a part of my duty was to attend to Dr. Rogers, who had then recently arrived from New York. On one occasion the Doctor was so pleased with my work that he gave me a silver dollar—a fortune in those days! The Doctor was afterward, in 1873, the Democratic legislator from McLean county, at the time when the Legislature did me the honor to elect me to the Senate of the United States. Dr. Rogers remarked on that occasion that he was so well pleased with the care I took of his horse, that if it were not for his politics, he would certainly give me his vote."

LEARNING A TRADE.

In 1840, by the advice of some of his relatives, he concluded to learn a trade. He selected carpentry, and was sent back to Kentucky, as if that were the only place in which a man could acquire that difficult profession—if it may be so termed. He remained in Kentucky, learned the trade, did odd jobs of carpentry, and in the spring of 1842, he returned once more to Illinois. By some irresistible attraction, wherever he wandered, Illinois always drew him back to the soil and the people of whom he was to become a part, and so weighty and worthy a representative. Is it true that some "destiny *will* shape our ends, rough-hew them as we may?" He tried to be an actor; he tried to become a farmer; a carpenter, a miner; he removed from Illinois to Kentucky, to Indiana, to California; but he failed in all his efforts. No other State would contain him, and he was driven repeatedly back to Illinois, often against his will and his judgment. Destiny had in store for him a mission, and would not be balked of its purpose.

In 1842, he returned to Illinois, worked at his trade when he could find anything to do, and in the winter of the same year, he obtained three months of the only regular schooling of his life,

under the teaching of Lemuel Allen, now a resident of Pekin, and who is regarded by his old pupil as a most capital instructor. In the spring of 1844, he made another attempt to woo the smiles of fortune by joining with Allen in the renting of forty acres of land near Decatur, which they divided equally between oats, corn, and hemp. They worked very hard, and at the close of the season the oats paid the rent of the land, Allen took the corn for his share, and Oglesby took the raw hemp. He invented a machine for braking it, spent a vast amount of time in getting it ready for the market, and at the close of the transaction he found himself with the results in his pocket, to-wit: \$6.50. This munificent return did not include his board, which had been furnished him for nothing by some of his relatives.

Evidently destiny did not intend him for a farmer. He had, however, managed to extract some compensation out of the year's labor. There was a flatboat built and launched at Decatur that year for use on the Sangamon river, the first of its kind at that point; and "I had the proud satisfaction," he says, "of having twisted from my flax, and on my walk, the rope with which the flatboat was launched." There was something of the man in the boy; he had worked all summer for less than nothing, but he was enabled to serve the public, and to a considerable extent he felt that his weary labor had not been wholly in vain.

A LAW STUDENT.

At this point in his life there came a change. In 1844, being then 20 years of age, he gave up manual labor, and entered on the study of law in the office of Judge Silas W. Robbins, in Springfield, Ill. He was in no condition to begin the study of any profession, as he had had no opportunity for any preparatory reading or cultivation. The first book which he ever read through, was the first volume of Blackstone's Commentaries. His board was paid by his brother-in-law, Mr. Prather, of Decatur. One of his fellow-students was Benjamin Prettyman, who afterwards attained some distinction as a lawyer, and is now a resident of Tazewell county. In the autumn of 1845, he was licensed to practice, and opened an office in Sullivan, Moultrie county. Here, for the first time, he studied the statutes of the State, and also the Constitution of the United States. He had some cases at the spring term, and then returned to Decatur.

A MEXICAN-WAR SOLDIER.

It may be inferred that he was not pleased with the law, or else that fate had yet some more buffetings in store for him before she deemed fitted for his final task. She wished to broaden his experience, and this time sent him out as a soldier. He enlisted as a private for the Mexican war, and, although at the time the posi-

tion was a humble one, the step had its influence in later life. It prepared him for intelligent participation in the gigantic Civil War of the States, and was the foundation on which was based the high promotion which was constructed for his benefit and as a reward for his services.

He enlisted in Company C of the Eighth Illinois Infantry, Col. Baker in command. He was elected Second Lieutenant at the company election, and evidently, at last, found himself in a congenial atmosphere. He became a close student of Hardee's tactics, and in a little time was made drillmaster of the company. He was so successful in this work that in a little time he had made the company the best-drilled one in the regiment, but had made himself thoroughly disliked by many of the members, who were not disposed to submit to such tasks, and who saw no reason why they should not enjoy soldiering as they would a picnic.

RUNNING A FOOT-RACE.

A little episode grew out of this unpopularity which is illustrative of a salient trait in the character of the Governor. The opposition against him grew into open murmurs, and arranged itself about a member of the same company, who, it was urged by the malcontents, would be a better man in Oglesby's place. They began to demand that there should be held another election.

One day, at the close of a dress parade, a young man stepped in front of the company and said in a loud voice, "I will bet two jackknives and a quarter of a dollar that Blank (naming the rival of the unpopular lieutenant) can beat Dick Oglesby in a foot-race of sixty yards." A friend of the latter immediately stepped forward and accepted a challenge.

"I knew at once," said the Governor, in commenting on the incident, "what this challenge meant. It was an attempt to disgrace me. He was a noted athlete, especially as a runner, and it was thought he could beat me easily. Then it was expected that I would be forced to resign, and he would, of course, be elected to fill the vacancy.

"I accepted the challenge, for there was nothing else to do. It was success or ruin. The proposed event created an immense amount of excitement, and was the talk of the camp. I had my supporters, and they bet their jackknives, money, when they had it, and anything which would be accepted as a wager.

"The appointed day came, and, stripped to the buff, except as to trousers, we toed the line. Both were bareheaded, I was barefooted, he wore his stockings. Along on both sides of the track to be run over the entire regiment was gathered, and with it were vast numbers of civilian spectators. I felt that my very life was on the race, and that I would win—I *must* win.

"The word was given, and we started like deer-hounds. We ran abreast, not the fraction of an inch being perceptible as the gain

of either. Pull away from him I could not. The crowd roared and cheered, and frantically called the names of one or the other of us to win the race. Clinging thus to each other, we went on till we began to near the line, and for a moment a feeling of despair came over me, and I believed I was lost! Just then there came over me like an electric flash the conviction, I cannot, I must not, lose! A mighty impulse possessed me; I made a prodigious bound and crossed the line six inches in advance!

"The roar that went from the crowd was deafening! I was the hero of the hour! From that time there was no opposition in the company, and my opponent became a hearty friend."

On his return from Mexico, he resumed the practice of law at Decatur, until December of 1848, when he attended for three months the Louisville Law School, and received his diploma in the spring of 1849.

He had hardly had his diploma framed and hung up, when he abandoned the practice of law, became a modern Jason, chartered and rigged an Argo in the shape of a six-mule team, and started in search of the Golden Fleece, then to be found in a later Colchis known as California. He made the trip, but was crushed between the Symplegades in a loss of \$3,000 by the failure of Barton, and the loss of \$3,500 by the burning of Nevada. He returned from California, having in his possession a portion of the Golden Fleece, whose cash or marketable value was rated at \$4,500, and immediately thereafter he resumed the practice of law. This was in 1852.

PRACTICING LAW.

"At that time," related the Governor, "Judge David Davis, of Bloomington, was the Circuit Judge. Judges Emerson and Benedict and Capt. J. S. Post were then prominent lawyers at the bar of Decatur. Mr. Lincoln occasionally attended the court at Decatur, as he had for years before, and was always a welcome visitor to the court and bar. He had arisen to distinction in our State in 1840, when I first heard him in joint debate with Judge Douglas at the court house in Decatur. He was always kind to young lawyers, and perhaps because I was of the same political faith as he, he was uniformly courteous in his treatment of me. It was as much at his suggestion as for any other man that I became a candidate for elector on the Scott ticket in 1852."

VISITS THE OLD WORLD.

Judge Emerson having been promoted to the bench, Oglesby formed a partnership with Maj. S. Waite, which continued till 1856, when he determined to visit the Old World. During his absence he covered an enormous field of travel, in which were included Russia, all Eastern and Central Europe, the Holy Land,

Turkey, Italy, and every point of prominence in Western Europe. This trip to the Old World was a dividing line in his life.

Naturally a keen student of men, and quick to appreciate their qualities, he needed a larger area of study than that which had been presented by the limited confines in which he moved. His subjects anterior to his trip abroad, had been provincial and comparatively few in number. In broader fields he grew broader in comprehension; he encountered novel social conditions, and mastered their organization and their meaning, as well as their utility.

The sights of the Old World stimulated a desire for study and the learning to be found in books. He is, in consequence of the trip, more cultured, and is possessed of a wide knowledge of modern and ancient history and the lives of the great men who have influenced its information.

ON A LECTURING TOUR.

Soon after coming back he was in great demand for lectures. His lecture was supposed to be "The Holy Land," and this he has delivered hundreds of times, and always with the greatest success. On one occasion he lectured at Bloomington, Ill., Lincoln, Judge Davis and other men of note being present. He was warmly congratulated by these distinguished gentlemen, Lincoln remarking: "Dick, I don't know that I have heard anything which pleased me better." The pyramids having been mentioned in the lecture, Lincoln continued, turning to Judge Davis: "Well, Davis, it does not seem to be so far back to Abraham as it used to be when we were boys. Here we see a young man who has been at the pyramids, and stood on the ground where the Messiah and Abraham stood, and this seems to bring the human family a little closer together. A great work of man, like the pyramids, which I would like to see, seems to me to shorten the distance between the days of the old fathers and those of our own."

There is another little story concerning the lecture on The Holy Land, which is told by Gen. Grant, and which is not for public inspection in the Governor's stock of anecdotes. Grant tells it thus: "Oglesby was invited to deliver his lecture on The Holy Land in some Illinois town, and, consenting, was greeted with crowded audiences. He opened with the intention of giving a lecture of one hour in length, and started off with a little preliminary description of his adventures in Europe. At the end of two and a half hours he had not yet gotten out of Europe, and the audience was so delighted that he had to promise to appear another night, and give The Holy Land lecture. He appeared again, this time to a still larger and more enthusiastic assembly, to whom, as preliminary, he spoke a little of what he saw among the Cossacks of Western Europe, and what he found among the ruins of Poland. He spoke till half-past ten, having commenced at eight, and then had to adjourn without having said a word of the Holy Land.

Still a third appointment was made; the hall was crowded as before, and he commenced his journey by saying a little concerning Egypt, its wonderful antiquities, its pyramids, and its ruins. He became enthusiastic over his subject, and, after awhile, pulled out his watch and turned around to find out the hour. A look of profound astonishment came over his face as he glanced at the watch. Turning to a gentleman on the platform, 'Well, here it is eleven o'clock, and I'll be damned if I have got to the Holy Land yet!'

A CANDIDATE FOR CONGRESS.

In the spring of 1858, it was considered advisable to place a candidate before the people in the Decatur Congressional district, and the result was that he was chosen to make the run without there being held a convention. He was first spoken of as an independent candidate, but it was soon ascertained that his opponent, James C. Robinson, the Democratic nominee, was determined that Oglesby should be placed squarely upon the platform as a Republican candidate. "In our joint debate," said the Governor, "I found that my position as an independent candidate was untenable; besides it was not congenial to my feelings. I saw that Mr. Robinson, with a large majority to begin with, would be likely to increase it, and, without consulting my friends, in our joint debate at Marshall, in Clark county, I came out and took strong Republican ground; and from that time on it was a rough-and-tumble fight, but good-naturedly conducted to the end of the campaign. Mr. Robinson was an able debater and a strong man in his party, and I had my hands full to compete with him."

An incident of this campaign is thus related by the Governor: "On one occasion a meeting was held at Louisville, Clay county, and as Robinson had the concluding speech, I adjourned to the street in front of the hotel, where I found an Irishman with a violin, and about him were some of his friends. He asked me if I could play. I answered that I thought I could play well enough for a street dance, and taking the fiddle I began playing the 'Arkansaw Traveler.' A crowd soon collected; large numbers came out of the court house in which Robinson was speaking, and soon there was a dance in progress in which everybody took a part. Upon closing his speech, my worthy opponent came out, looked for a moment over the scene, and then, to get even with me, he rushed into the dance, pulled off his coat and commenced dancing with the vim of a dervish. It is my honest opinion that before the dance was over, he had recaptured from me every friend that I had made by my fiddling. The only satisfaction that I got out of the occurrence was, that I had been able to make the Democratic candidate dance to my music."

The friends of Robinson had confidently expected to carry the district by from 4,000 to 5,000 votes; his actual majority was a little over 1,800.

In 1860, in order to aid in the election of Judge Trumbull to the United States Senate, Oglesby consented to run for the State Senate from the Bloomington district, which had heretofore been Democratic by a majority of 1,200. He consented; his opponent, Col. Coler, was a strong and popular man; there were joint debates and a vast amount of excitement, with the result that Oglesby was elected by a majority of 240 votes.

LINCOLN'S ADVICE.

The Governor relates the following in regard to Lincoln:

"In 1840, when I was 16 years of age, I attended a log-cabin convention at Springfield, and heard Mr. Lincoln speak. He afterwards held a joint debate with Judge Douglas, in Decatur, where I heard him, and was introduced to him in company with some other young boys. I was greatly fascinated with the simplicity of his character, his droll anecdotes, and fund of sayings, but above and beyond all these I was attracted to him by the charming manner in which he discussed politics on the stump. He was long and ungraceful in his usual movements, but in the midst of debate, and when earnestly engaged, there was a glow on his face, a sublime air in his manner, and a lofty tone, which elevated not only the argument, but lifted upon and encouraged everyone who listened to him. Whilst I cannot say he was partial to any one in his intercourse with men, he was uniformly courteous, mild and polite towards all. He did not seem to seek favor by personal electioneering, but he never turned coldly or formally from any man. All whom he knew he addressed by their given name, and those to whom he was introduced, he met equally kindly. As I grew into manhood and observed his methods, I soon learned, as everybody else did, to look upon him as a great and thoughtful man, capable of great actions and true devotion to any cause he might espouse.

"I instinctively followed him through the dying days of Whiggery and into Republicanism, and was often encouraged by him to go manfully forward in the struggle of life. Once in the course of a conversation, I do not remember where, I recall distinctly his saying: '*Dick, remember to keep close to the people; they are always right, and will never mislead any one!*' "

IN THE WAR AGAINST THE SLAVEHOLDERS.

The war career of the Governor was one which extended over a good deal of time, included several battles, and was rewarded by promotion of almost unprecedented rapidity. He was made Colonel of the Eighth Illinois Volunteers. He was in command for a time in Cairo and at Bird's Point, in Missouri; he participated in the affair at Fort Henry and the battle of Fort Donelson, and he was so severely wounded in the second battle of Corinth, that the physicians announced that he could not recover. He was promoted

to a Brigadier-Generalship after the battle of Donelson. His wound so interfered with his movements in the field, that he was forced finally to leave the active service. He presided over the general court martial, held in Washington, by which Surgeon-General Hammond was tried, and finally was permitted by Stanton to resign, in order to permit him to accept the nomination for Governor, which had been tendered him by the Republicans of Illinois, but it was only after the nomination had actually been made, that the resignation was accepted by the exacting Secretary of War. The nomination was made in May, 1864, and in the following autumn he was elected by a majority of some 30,000 votes.

He was very active during this period in carrying out war measures, and at the close of the war he visited the troops in the field, and after a long tour reached Washington the afternoon of the 14th of April, just in time to be there at the consummation of the work of the assassin Booth. He stayed with the President during the night of his death, and accompanied the remains on the long tour made by the funeral cortege on its way to Springfield.

In 1872, he was again elected Governor, this time by 40,000 majority, and within a short time after the assembling of the Legislature, he was elected to the United States Senate. He filled the position to the close of the term, when he retired to the private life which he now enjoys.

THE HOME OF THE EX-GOVERNOR.

The pilgrim sat in a high-backed rustic chair in the cosy library, and half-dreamingly and half-wonderingly reviewed the principal events in the career of this latter-day Æschines, who had, like his ancient antetype, been clerk, actor, and soldier; whose "earnest zeal and honesty won him great laurels, both in the field and the forum."

It is a library resembling its owner, plain, comfortable, without the smallest suggestion of ostentation or display. His holsters hang on the wall, and recall the charge at Donelson and the hot conflict at Corinth. The chairs are broad and capacious, placed on rockers, all indicative of ease and comfort. The pilgrim glances over the bookcases and finds them containing *multum in parvo*. They are not the books of a specialist, but of one who seeks for information in all departments. There is a little of China, something of Zoroaster, a touch of the ancient, a suggestion of social philosophy, and a scattering of the contemporary. Some history, a modicum of biography, many speeches, and a sparsity of romance. Plutarch has a place; so have Goethe, Pepy, Taine, Bacon, Gibbon, Hume, Thiers, Bancroft, Irving.

"What is your favorite author?" asked the visitor.

"I have none. I am just now reading 'William the Silent,' from the public library, and some theological works. I have never been a great reader. Here, how do you pronounce the name of that

author?" at the same time reaching out a small volume in gorgeous cloth binding, and entitled "Physics and Politics."

The pilgrim ventured a statement as to the pronounciation of Mr. Bagehot's name.

"Did you ever read it?" he asked.

Affirmative response.

"Did you understand it?"

"Not perfectly perhaps, but—"

"Well, I can't!" and he threw down the crimson-clad volume with a quick motion, indicative of vexation and contempt. "The fact is," he resumed a moment later, "I have never been what is called a great reader; nor do I believe that great reading is always of value. The difficulty with the masses of Americans is that we don't go deep enough into learning. We are skimmers; we are never permanent. We never stick to one thing because we always think we can better ourselves by doing something else. This is true of our reading; we skim that. In short, we never master anything—we skim it! we skim it!" A little later, as if dwelling upon his remark that he had never been a great reader, he added: "It is true I haven't great learning, but I would not exchange my knowledge of men for the learning of any man either living or dead!"

The library is the focus of the voices of the house. There come to it the babble and the laughter of the children and the notes of a piano. Occasionally there is an irruption of romping elves, who clamber over "papa," and anon scamper away. All the tones which reach the library are softened; they become rhythmic, mellow and free from irritation. The house is a child's elysium. Everywhere there are pictures of baby faces smiling from bracket and mantel; over the fire-place in the library is an engraving of the adoration of the babe by angels.

Now and then there comes into the library a stately woman. She is in accord with the quiet harmonies of the house. She speaks in a voice that is ever "soft, gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman." She has an intelligent, sympathetic face, is artistic in her suggestions, self-poised, matronly, yet young, and radiates from her quiet beauty a charm which influences all within its reach. Such is the admirable wife of the host of the library. It is a most charming family, complete, rounded, harmonious in all its parts, from the strong, virile head, to the gentle, sympathetic mother and the fair-faced, rollicking children.

A fond father and an excellent family man is the Governor. It is said by those who know him, that it is not an uncommon thing in the summer time to see him lying supine on the grass reading his paper, while a bevy of children swarms over him in the highest of glee. As the pilgrim writes, in the library he often hears the Governor, baby in arms, dancing over the floor of an adjacent room, chanting baby-talk in a species of monotone such as is expected to thrill the soul of a crowing infant. An accommodating

man, too, is the Governor. He leaves the room, and the pilgrim monopolizes the green-baize table with his scribbling. A half-hour later he glances into the conservatory and there sees the Governor, bent into a painful angle, leaning over a miniature stand whose top reaches about to the level of his knees, and engaged in getting off his morning mail.

As a host the Governor has no superior. He presides easily at his table, has an eye on the wants of his guests, converses fluently and gracefully on most topics. He is a conversationalist who *feels*; his subject often inspires him, and he not infrequently drops knife and fork, and, with characteristic gestures, blazing eyes, and voice inflated with sympathy, launches some burning remarks, everyone of which is forcible, apposite, and effective.

A curious thing about him is the extent of his information. It is not broad and comprehensive in the direction of authors, but is wonderful as to its eccentricity. Now he has a quotation from Confucius, or something mayhap from Tyndall or Huxley. He was chatting about something which he illustrated by a quotation from the New Testament:

"Let's see," said he, musingly "where's that from?"

"Hum—hum," responded the pilgrim doubtfully, "that's something from Paul to Tim—"

"No it isn't! That's from the fifth chapter of Matthew and the thirty-fourth verse. See! here it is!" as he fished out a well-used bible and pointed out the chapter and verse precisely as he had announced it.

AS AN ORATOR.

One of the most striking qualities in his comprehensive composition is his power as an orator. Probably in the role of what is somewhat indefinitely known as a "stump-speaker" he has no superior on the continent. He seems to at once get himself in sympathy with his auditors. He is electric, moving, full of a penetrating enthusiasm which communicates itself to his listeners, and they thenceforth are swayed under his impetuous eloquence like the waves of the sea by a tempest.

Some one relates that in 1878 he spoke at a political meeting in Tuscola. Two old men came into the hall, so old, so decrepit, so rheumatic in their ancient bodies, that they could but just crawl. They were rheumy, stiff, deaf and querulous. One came in on crutches, and the other hobbled along painfully, supported by a couple of canes. They secured seats and sat down as if they intended to stay there the remainder of their days. Oglesby was at his best. He warmed up gradually until his listeners began to writhe and gasp under the influence of his inspired words. The two old men shared the contagion of his eloquence; they straightened up, their dim eyes began to enkindle and their slow pulse to keep time with the outrushing torrent. A few moments more and

the two octogenarians were on their feet with the remainder of the audience, dancing wildly about, swinging their canes and crutches, and yelling in their enthusiasm with a volume and a strength of tone which they had not before known for half a century. For a moment they were young again; for a moment

Hope enchanted smiled and waived her golden hair.

It is not long since he spoke to an immense audience in Chicago, which had been called to meet in the armory on the lake, to discuss municipal matters. There were many of the best speakers in the city present, and who in turn addressed the people. Oglesby was called on for a speech, and it was but a little time before he had the great crowd on its feet and hurrahing as if it were mad.

The speaker himself becomes as excited as his audience. Great rivers of perspiration pour off his brow and adown his cheeks. As an admirer of him said, in speaking of his eloquence, "he melts off his collars and his cuffs."

"How do you speak?" queried the pilgrim. "What preparation do you make?"

"I make none. The only speech which I ever wrote was the one which I delivered at the dedication of the Lincoln monument at Springfield. That I read, and it is the exception of my life. How do I speak? I don't know. The other evening I was at the encampment at Decatur, and was called on for a speech. When I rose to my feet I had not the smallest idea what I should say. I happened to have the ritual in my hand, and unconsciously glanced at the opening line. An idea came, and I followed it up. I spoke for some time, and I judge from the enthusiasm of the audience, that the address was well received. [It was vociferously received.] And yet, till I was on my feet and happened to glance at the opening line of the ritual, I had not a shadow of a thought as to what I was to say. What is curious about it is, that the line of thought which I followed was entirely new to me—which I had never entertained before."

"What are the processes of your thoughts under the pressure of a speech?"

"O, I hardly know. I don't study a subject in advance. When I get on my feet I have an idea, or one presents itself, and I begin to bring it out. As I get on a little another comes, like a little side rivulet, and then there comes another and another of these feeders till there is a heavy stream which carries me along, as it were, without effort."

This is true inspiration. It is spontaneous, instantaneous, without preparation, without design. It is that kind of which Shakespeare speaks:

Aged ears play truant at his tales,
And younger hearings are quite ravished;
So sweet and voluble is his discourse.

His entire freedom from notes or prepared efforts is well illustrated by a little incident which is related by a gentleman who is

his secretary. The Governor was invited, during the latter part of the seventies, to deliver an address at the State Fair to be held at Freeport. The time of the notice was very short, and he instructed his secretary to prepare something which should include the proper amount of statistics. The latter duly collected the required matter and forwarded it to Freeport in a trunk to the Governor. He delivered a capital address which lasted over an hour, and was exceedingly well received.

"How did you like the speech I prepared for you?" asked the secretary on his return, inspired with the hope that he was about to receive a gracious compliment for his effort.

"What speech?" asked the astonished Governor.

He had forgotten all about his instructions to his assistant, and had delivered one of his unpremeditated discourses.

While he is an orator who particularly appeals to the masses, he has an equal hold on cultivated audiences. He touches all with his splendid oratory and his intense feeling; and is a better, clearer thinker when on his feet than on any other occasion.

Two, at least, of his speeches will pass into history as among the grand oratorical efforts of the age. One of these was when he rose from his bed, to which he was confined from the gun-shot wound at Corinth, to address the people at Springfield, in February, 1863, on the state of the country. The other was delivered at the same place, and was a denunciation of Andrew Johnson. It was spoken in the spring of 1866, and at a time when the speaker was Governor of the State. Both excited wide attention, and both exerted a most marked influence in the direction intended, and placed him at once in the ranks of the first orators of the country, and demonstrated his right to be assigned as a peer of sagacious and far-seeing statesmen.

KEEPING CLOSE TO THE PEOPLE.

"Dick, remember to keep close to the people; they are always right, and will never mislead any one!" These words of Lincoln are flavored with the political essence of the man who uttered them. They are close akin to his sublime utterance: "This Nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." In this direction Oglesby has followed the republican leader. He believes in the people; he "keeps close" to them; he believes that "they are always right," and that they will never "mislead any one." He is their friend, their counselor. His mail is largely composed of letters from the people; they ask his advice; they thank him for what he has done for them; they delicately ask what they can do for him.

It is from the people that he gains at once his inspiration and his strength. He is in constant contact with them, and they are a mighty reservoir which supplies him with sympathy, his tender

sensitiveness to suffering, his hatred of all forms of wrong whose purpose is the oppression of the weak. He fought the South, not for office, nor for promotion, nor for fame, but for the sole reason that he believed that a part of the people—the 4,000,000 slaves of the South—were unjustly deprived of their freedom. He is today the advocate of the people, opposed to monopoly, class oppression, aggressive aristocracy, and aught which has the tendency to abridge the freedom of the masses.

F. B. WILKIE.



